

Public Outreach: What we heard

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) held a kick-off meeting in April 2004, where the Neighborhood Business District Strategy goals and objectives were presented. The goals and objectives were developed with the guidance of an advisory committee of diverse stakeholders over the course of 2003 and early 2004.

In June 2004, six workshops in a variety of Seattle Neighborhoods were held to discuss the Neighborhood Business District Strategy. This involves rewriting the Commercial Land Use Code to better meet the goals and objectives of Seattle's Comprehensive and Neighborhood Plans to create and maintain active, vibrant, pedestrian-oriented business districts at the heart of our urban villages.

DPD gave a presentation on some of the research and options the City is considering to help achieve NBDS goals, followed by small group discussions. Relative to the options being considered, we heard back from participants on the following four major themes:

Sidewalk/streetscape design and elements

The ideas discussed in most groups included lighting, continuous streetfronts, awnings, furniture, trees, curbs, open space and cafes. Wide sidewalks are universally understood as necessary for a pedestrian-friendly streetfront. Many groups emphasized the importance of having, or giving the appearance of, multiple small businesses along a street in terms of providing a lively streetscape.

Transportation

Discussions related to transportation ranged from the monorail and transit to bikes and slowing/calming traffic, as well as overall safety. We heard from many that transit is very important, and that bus stops, transit stations and railways must be well-designed to help business districts be successful. Participants from some areas also brought up the need for safe pathways and sidewalks for residents, employees and shoppers to get to transit stops in all areas; without these connections it is difficult to encourage pedestrian and transit access to business districts.

Parking

The discussion topics included on-street parking, shared parking, and neighborhood garages. There was general understanding among participants of the complexity and difficulty of regulating parking. Several participants see the City having the role of ensuring that parking demands are met. Other

participants saw parking as an issue that the market is responsible for, and that parking is never really "free." There was some concern that by reducing the parking required of private developers additional spillover impacts would result. Other expressed a need for neighborhood parking garages. Finally, there was general agreement among participants that the availability of short-term parking was a key to successful business districts.

Different types of uses and mapping commercial areas

The discussions ranged from retail and commercial uses, residential uses, and diversity of uses, to incentives for different uses, including mixed uses. We heard general acceptance of the notion of being flexible about ground-level residential where appropriate. Consistent with our direction, we also heard that in commercial "nodes" we must be careful and appropriately require commercial and retail uses at ground level. Participants of some areas want retail-only nodes; others want to be more flexible about the types of commercial uses allowed at ground level. In some neighborhoods, we also heard that more depth of commercial zoning is desired or needed (particularly areas zoned in "strips"), and that more density surrounding the commercial core is necessary to support businesses.